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O Lord, come! This has been the cry of the Christian centuries. Out of the misery, the sin, the despair of their daily life, men have looked forward to a better age which Jesus should bring in. Humanity is evil; God himself must establish by miracle the reign of righteousness and joy.

Sometimes this hope has been baldly literal. The Judge was to appear in the sky, the dead were to be given back their flesh, the millions of millions who have made up history were to be gathered before the throne high in the heavens. After the final judgment, the evil were to be sent to eternal fire where they were to burn forever and forever, suffering mental and physical agony.

But prior to this last determination of final destinies, Jesus was to return to bind Satan and reign upon the earth during a thousand years in which evil was to be held in check, and the Christians were to enjoy every blessing in a nation ruled by Jesus from Jerusalem. The thousand years were to be followed by the final conflict in which goodness as embodied in a conquering Christ was to be made eternally triumphant.



You say you do not believe this? There are thousands who do, and among them some of the most earnest Christian workers. Indeed, they frankly say that the belief in such a physical return of Jesus as conqueror is the great motive of their earnestness.

But they minimize the horrors of this primitive belief of Jewish revolutionaries which the early Christians held. They do not share in the desire for revenge upon oppressors that moved the writers of apocalypses like those which bear the name of Enoch and of Peter. They believe in a literal coming in the sky, but they do not believe—at least many of them do not believe—in literal lakes of fire.

They are too Christian to rejoice in other people's tortures. They want Christ to reign and they want righteousness to be universal.



And who does not? Those of us who can see that Christianity is not to be identified precisely with the beliefs of primitive Christians, who have learned to interpret rather than indiscriminately to appropriate the messianic pictures of Jewish literature reappearing in the New Testament—we, too, believe that there can be no lasting peace or justice until Jesus is supreme in humanity. That sin cannot ultimately bring joy, that wrong must give way before the gospel, this, too, we believe because we believe in Jesus as the revelation of very God. In that sense we are premillenarian.



Why, then, this bitterness of assault of those Christians who hold the Judaistic messianic hope upon those who hold the hope of a spiritually triumphant Jesus?

Partly because they believe we do not believe in the Bible.

Partly because they believe that we belittle Jesus.

Partly because some of their champions have taken up into their spirits some of the rancor and pessimism born of the passion for revenge that beats in the Jewish apocalypses and came over into the later books of the New Testament like Jude and the Revelation.

And partly because we ourselves through intellectual pride have failed to realize that the gospel is a promise of victory rather than a mere call to moral obligations. Our thought may have been accurate, but our hearts may have been too cold.



Let us understand each other and be reconciled because of our common trust in Jesus as the world's Savior and future Master.

It is sad to see Christian brethren offer their gifts at the altar when either is conscious that the other has aught against him. Let us first be reconciled to each other and then offer to our God each his own gift of honest, though differing, theories of the Lord's coming.



For even as we pray, O Lord, come! the Lord replies,
I never went away. I have been with you and will be with you
all the days. I have come to you. Will you come to Me?